

## FLIRT OF THE CITY

Now She Unconsciously Fascinates All Beholders.

SHE SIMPLY CANNOT HELP IT

That's Where She Differs From the Scientific Flirt, the Predatory Flirt and the Infatuated Flirt—Artful Angles.



WHAT a charming girl! Do introduce her to me, I feel sure that I should like her," said I one evening at a reception.

"And my hostess with a smile replied: "Miss Zee? Oh, of course she's charming, but—"

The sentence was not finished, for some one entered to whom the hostess must speak and at the same time a friend claimed my attention. After the usual amenities had passed and we were slowly promenading the room I returned to my quest a little curious to find out what that "but" meant.

"A pretty girl over there," said I earnestly, and my escort smiled just as my hostess had done.

"Miss Zee? Very pretty, very pretty indeed, but—"

"But what?" demanded I so vivaciously as to mildly astonish my friend, who hastened to reply:

"Oh, nothing scandalous, nothing disagreeable, only she's, I suppose, the most accomplished flirt in existence."

"Oh, that's it!" responded I, and when my friend had to go away and dance I managed myself alongside of a dear old dowager and said:

"I should like to know Miss Zee. Are you acquainted with her?"

"Yes—that is, I know all her people and speak to her when she comes in my way, but, my dear, she's such a horrid flirt that really I cannot approve of her."

"I'm not afraid of her," laughed I, "and here she comes."

"Oh, of course," replied my dowager, a little sourly, and beckoned with her fan to the girl, who had paused close beside us.

"Zee, this lady wishes to know you," said she coldly, and the next moment a pair of luminous gray eyes met mine, a sweet smile developed two lovely dimples and a voice of music said:

"It is so kind of you to let me make your acquaintance, dear Mrs. Leslie. I have waited for a whole year."

Of course this was a very ordinary, in fact a commonplace, sort of thing to say, but the look, the smile, the voice, and withal an air of simple candor pervading the whole gave a charm to the little utterance which very elaborate compliments sometimes fail to convey. I at once liked Miss Zee, and I determined to watch her a little and see some of the terrific flirting which seemed to have

gained the reputation of a "man-stealer" for such a lovely creature.

I had not met her half a dozen times before I made up my mind that she was no more of a flirt consciously than the ugliest and coarsest girl in the world would be, but the trouble was that nature had endowed her with a perfectly irresistible power of fascination. She did not especially care for me; in fact, we never met after that season, for she married and went to Australia, where she drove the whole colony mad; but the little compliment with which she acknowledged my desire for an introduction was for the moment the genuine expression of her feelings, and her wonderful charm of manner added weight and force to the pretty phrase.

Here, then, was the secret of Miss Zee's being called a flirt, and here, as I believe, is the secret of a great many other women's gaining the same unenviable reputation. Such a girl or woman has quick sympathies, tender and pitiful feelings, great tact and an amiable desire to make everybody content and happy. Added to these there must be sufficient beauty to give expression to the face, and a sweet, flexible voice, for the tones of a voice and glance of the eyes are quite as effective as any spoken words can be. A girl thus constituted is pretty sure to be called a flirt, for each man who approaches her is at once convinced that she intends him to understand that she is especially interested in him, and he is accordingly flattered. Going on this basis he comes to imagine his own rights to this gentle sympathy and absorbed attention to his confidences, quite exclusive, and when he sees some other man receiving just the same looks and smiles and tones he is very much aggrieved and immediately stigmatizes his late goddess as a flirt.

This kind of woman I call the inevitable or irresponsible flirt. She really cannot help what she does any more than certain sorts of flowers can help exuding a gummy sweet, which at once attracts and enchains the insects always hovering about them. She is so constituted physically that her eyes, her smile, her voice, her figure, her motion and her repose exercise a powerful fascination upon the beholder, and if it is a man they arouse in him that personal interest, that instinct of pursuit, that desire to attract notice to himself which almost every man feels toward almost every woman with any claim to youth or beauty or charm of any sort.

But this power of physical fascination is only the first part of the armory of the unconscious flirt. The victim thus attracted by this primary power is secured, bound hand and foot, and sometimes imprisoned for life by the mental, or rather by the sympathetic, charm now brought to bear on him. Never before did he find any one who so quickly and so thoroughly understood him; never did any one so sweetly enter into the perplexities of his business life or his political questions that absorbed him; and never did any woman show such intelligent yet feminine interest in the political questions that absorbed him; and probably the poor fellow never—even after he has become emancipated and speaks of his charmer as an accomplished flirt—never does he quite comprehend that upon all these topics it was he who did both the talking and the understanding, and she only listened and looked and smiled and murmured soft assents

in the right place.

This kind of a flirt I, for one, admire, and at the same time sincerely pity. She can't help being what she is, and she is altogether charming in being it, so that, although one feels quite sure of being forgotten the moment one is out of sight, it is very delightful to look in the sunshine for the moment. I pity her, too, because so few persons understand her and almost everybody blames her for being the flirt she really cannot help being. As well blame a hummingbird for not being a barnyard fowl and laying good, useful eggs. Me, I prefer hummingbirds to poultry—at least sometimes.

In distinction to the unconscious flirt we have the scientific flirt. She by no means practices her little arts because she can't help it, but lays her plans and studies her tactics as seriously as Napoleon or Wellington ever did. She flirts just as men go gunning or fishing, because they enjoy the sport of stalking their game or playing their trout, and when the deer is killed or the fish landed it immediately becomes lost to interest and the sportsman is absorbed in looking out for the next prize.

The scientific flirt does not beam upon every comer as the unconscious flirt does—she selects her subject with skill and care. A man must have the power of amusing her; he must have quickness of comprehension and the capacity of suffering and of feeling to make it worth her while to throw a hook and bait in his direction. Great stupid fellows, or men filled with an absorbing love of some profession or of art or of their own selves, are quite uninteresting to the scientific flirt. To carry our simile a little farther, they are not "game fish," and she treats them with supercilious indifference or good natured contempt. She likes a man who will tilt with her, break a spear in his own defense, but finally succumb to her superior prowess; she likes, of all things, to see him try to persuade himself that he likes some other woman better than he does her, and to calmly swoop down and bear him away.

But perhaps this swooping operation belongs more exclusively to a class of experts who may fairly be ranked as predatory flirts. This class cares very little for any man not already appropriated by another woman. They like young married men, or men engaged to be married, and it is with an unholo joy that they survey the conscientious struggles their victims often make in the beginning. I was interested once in watching the progress of such an affair, which ran its course literally under my eyes at a fashionable summer hotel in Switzerland.

The flirt was a woman of singular charm of manner and voice; not especially handsome, but with great gray eyes, which she managed to perfection, and a cloud of soft dead gold hair, out of which she looked upon the world with innocent surprise and inquiry. The subject was an English army officer, and as fine looking a fellow as I ever saw, but awfully spoiled by flattery. The bride was a nice little person with commonplace written all over her pretty little face and figure and her highly respectable English toilets. They sat opposite each other at the table d'hôte, where I also took my dinner for the sake of studying the company.

My seat was next to the bride and my

attention was at first attracted to the sport by perceiving her disturbance—in fact, if the expression is not too coarse, I could not but perceive that she was "squirming" in a manner suggestive of some unseen but vicious little enemy such as are the constant danger of travelers in Europe. It was not long, however, before I perceived that the poor little bride's assailant was flirt, and not flea, and I sympathized with her all the more sincerely that her troubles involved no danger to myself.

It was really an artistic study to watch the proceedings of the next few days; the growing annoyance and terror of the bride; the floundering and plungings of the victim before he fairly swallowed the hook, and his perfect infatuation and docility when he had done so; also the cynical interest with which the flirt's father, a very wicked old gentleman, as I should judge, watched his daughter's maneuvers. As for the flirt herself, I feel deeply indebted to her for the insight she afforded me into the science of her favorite amusement. I never saw any flirting done so methodically, so calmly and so unrelentingly. I don't think the girl herself was in the least moved either to fancy the man or pity the woman or care for the consequences to either; she simply pursued her amusement with just the dispassionate and educated interest with which the angler lands his trout or the entomologist nets and pins his butterfly.

But just before we were to leave Lucerne I took occasion to suggest to the bride that it was a pity her father and mother should not have a peep at the lakes during this lovely weather, and that if I were in her place I should write and urge them to join herself and her husband at once.

Poor child! She flushed rosy red and glanced at me with a big interrogation mark in each eye, but I only laughed and kissed her goodby.

Another variety is the infantile flirt—the young woman who carries the ingenuous business to its bitter end and thrusts her baby hands into men's heart-strings as ruthlessly as a veritable infant would make tatters of the priceless lace vestments of the pope himself.

The ingenuous business belongs to that school of super-cunning advocated by Edgar Poe in his story of "The Purloined Letter," where the apparent absence of all guile is the very essence of deep diplomacy. Nothing can be more effective if it is conscientiously done and artistically carried out, and the infantile flirt is one of the most successful practitioners of her peculiar art. It might be supposed that methods so simple as hers would have been fatigued and exposed long since, but the truth remains that each successive generation of men is just as simple and just as easily deceived as the previous one, and that no man ever allows himself to be warned either by the experience of his predecessors or the voice of the women belonging to him, although they eagerly seek to betray the little artifices and pretences of the infantile flirt. The great trouble with most men is that they think themselves so wise already that they decline to listen to the words of wisdom from those who know more than they do.

Beyond these three great classes there are several others and a great many of what may be styled eclectic practitioners; flirts who pursue all methods, as oc-

casional serves; flirts who, chameleonlike, adapt themselves to their subject, become all things to all men, and so win all, or nearly all. Then there are flirts so omnivorous that they will flirt with women as well as men, and cannot be content without attracting the personal interest of every human being who approaches them.

Mrs. FRANK LESLIE.

Took a Mean Advantage.

Jess—I thought you hated Jack, and yet you have accepted him.

Bess—I did hate him; but he proposed under an umbrella, and said if I refused him he would let the rain drip on my new hat.—New York Herald.

Delicate to a Fault.

Mrs. Slimson—My Clara is an awfully delicate girl; she can't stand anything.

Mrs. Van Blanter—Neither can my Maude. She put on a sailor hat the other day and it made her seasick.—Cleveland Review.

Entirely Different.

Coro—You must be crazy to think of marrying a poet.

Laura—But you must remember that Howard is not a common poet. He writes advertising poetry.—New York Evening Sun.

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E. R. STEINBERG, Mendon, North Dakota.

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